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Report on field visit to Senegal*

Introduction

1. Representatives of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA visited Senegal from 25 February to 1 March 2002. The Group was composed of members representing the following countries: Brazil, Bulgaria, Djibouti,[1] Finland, Gabon, Islamic Republic of Iran, Luxembourg, the Netherlands,[2] Peru, Romania, the United States of America and Yemen.[3] The mission was accompanied by Mr. Richard Snyder, Chief, Executive Board Branch, UNFPA.

2. The Group met with H.E. President Abdoulaye Wade, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance and several government representatives. Field visits to the project sites of UNDP, UNFPA, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) were combined with discussions with the heads of United Nations organizations and bilateral donors present in Senegal to enhance the understanding of the Group. One day was spent in Kedegou, 700 km outside of Dakar. The mission provided valuable insights into the role and work of UNDP, UNFPA, UNCDF and UNIFEM in Senegal.

3. The Group wishes to thank the Government of Senegal for its hospitality and the extensive and frank discussions. The mission would furthermore like to express its sincere appreciation to the UNDP and UNFPA resident representatives and staff, as well as their civil society counterparts, for the excellent preparation of the visits. A special word of thanks goes to Mr. Richard Snyder and Madame Ba Bongo Havo Talla, of the protocol department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for their stimulating energy and enthusiasm.

Political and socio-economic context

4. Senegal is a Sahelian country situated in the far west of the African continent. With a human development index (HDI) of 0.423 in 1999, Senegal ranked 145 out of 162 countries, placing it in the low-income category, according to the *Human Development Report 2001*. According to household surveys in 1994 and 1995, 65.3 per cent of the population lives below

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* The collection and analysis of current data required to present the Executive Board with the most up-to-date information has delayed submission of the present document.

[1] Mr. Ayad Mousseid Yahya was selected co-rapporteur of the mission.

[2] Ms. Betty van der Heijden was selected co-rapporteur of the mission.

[3] H.E. Ambassador Ahmed A. Al-Haddad was selected team leader of the mission.

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the poverty line. Extreme poverty is found predominately in the rural areas. In 2001, Senegal was classified as a least developed country. The challenges to lift the population out of poverty are substantial: the infant mortality rate is 68 per 1 000 live births; only 50 per cent of the population has access to drinking water; the illiteracy rate for adults is 64.5 per cent, including 74 per cent of women. The ecological degradation, including desertification and deforestation, are causes for deep concern. Senegal elaborated a national poverty alleviation programme in 1997 and is in the process of finalizing a poverty reduction strategy paper.

5. The economy of Senegal has grown steadily since the second half of the 1990s. In real terms, the annual growth rate of gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated at 5.3 per cent for the period 1995-2001. With a relatively high population growth rate of 2.7 per cent on average, the economic growth rate has little potential to translate into tangible improvements in the lives of the poor. Growth has thus far failed to generate sufficient jobs for the large number of unemployed youth in Senegal. Of the 9 million inhabitants, 58 per cent are younger than 20 years of age. Reaching the Millennium development goal (MDG) of halving poverty by 2015 requires a sustained growth campaign focused on the poor, backed up with adequate redistribution policies and substantial aid to this resource poor country.

6. The Government of Senegal has taken steps to open its economy and create the conditions that will encourage additional investment – both national and international – in its development effort. To this end, the Government supports the regional initiatives and is a primary promoter of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

7. Women represent 52 per cent of the population in Senegal. Women's social status remains closely tied to their role as mothers. The new constitution, adopted in 2001, raised women's status: forced marriage is considered an infringement of women's individual freedom and women have the right to own and manage their private property, including land, without their husbands' consent. The effective enforcement of those provisions, however, is still lacking, owing mainly to socio-cultural constraints and resistance to change based on traditional beliefs, especially in rural areas.

8. Senegal has a tradition of democratic governance. In early 2000, political power changed hands in Senegal following transparent multiparty presidential elections. This peaceful transition is evidence of the country's strong commitment to democracy. The priority objectives of the new Government are the fight against poverty and illiteracy, employment generation and improvement of health care. The coalition Government is taking action to improve the administration and public affairs. The population expressed widespread support for the overall reform process in a referendum.

Coordination structures in Senegal

9. The overall coordination of development assistance takes place under government leadership. An important forum for coordination with the main multilateral and bilateral stakeholders is the Consultative Group. It has been several years, however, since a Consultative Group meeting was held to discuss progress in the implementation of the national poverty programme and the contribution of multilateral and bilateral partners to this process. Such strategic horizontal coordination is a vital ingredient in setting up a coherent, integrated development programme. The mission recommends that a Consultative Group meeting be organized, under the chairmanship of the Government, in the near future to discuss the contributions of all partners to the development of Senegal.

10. There are a sizeable number of United Nations organizations in Senegal. Almost 20 organizations have an office in Dakar, some of them with regional responsibilities. Of the total annual official development assistance (ODA) for Senegal, amounting to approximately $400 million, 16.6 per cent is derived from United Nations sources (not including the World Bank). The President, as well as government officials, repeatedly stressed that the United Nations is a responsive and well-appreciated partner in the fight against poverty.

11. The main task of interagency coordination within the United Nations rests with the Resident Coordinator. Such coordination takes place predominantly during monthly meetings, in which the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) also participate. The chair of this meeting rotates among its participants. This mechanism of shared responsibility has worked well and has created a clear sense of ownership within the United Nations community, as

witnessed during a meeting of the mission with the heads of organizations. On behalf of the United Nations system, the Resident Coordinator meets regularly with the Government on coordination issues.

12. The monthly interagency coordination meetings have recently focussed on the preparation of the common country assessment (CCA) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The meeting also discussed issues of mutual interest, such as a United Nations communication strategy for Senegal and exchange of information.

13. In light of the scale of the needs to be met, only an alliance between partners can produce significant results. The mission, however, found little evidence of joint programming, which may be partly explained by the obstacles presented by different rules and procedures of United Nations organizations, other multilateral agencies and bilateral donors. In keeping with the resolution of the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development (TCPR) adopted by the 56th General Assembly in December 2001, the mission recommends that the United Nations system explore the possibilities of joint programming. The mission calls on the United Nations funds and programmes to harmonize and simplify expeditiously their rules and regulations to facilitate joint programming.

14. Apart from the United Nations interagency coordination, sectoral groups led by an interested multilateral or bilateral partner have been set up, dealing with health, education and environment, for example. There appears to be no strong and well-coordinated inter-ministerial government direction in these vertical coordination structures. The various groups each have their own dynamics that depend on the leadership provided by the chair of the group. In as far as the mission could ascertain, the main outcome of the sectoral coordination groups is information sharing, except in the health sector where there is joint programming and joint interventions of bilateral and multilateral agencies. Coordinated joint interventions in a sector are rare.

15. The Resident Representative and the World Bank Country Director co-chair quarterly meetings of bilateral and multilateral donors. These meetings serve to exchange information on the major issues facing Senegal and its partners. They also serve to oversee the functioning of the thematic groups and to draw lessons from their findings. The co-chairing of such meetings by UNDP and the World Bank in a Consultative Group country is an innovative formula that reflects the harmonious relations between the two institutions in Senegal.

16. With new instruments, such as budget support and sector-wide approaches, being developed, strong government lead in coordination becomes more important. The mission felt that in order to make more effective use of resources and to benefit from comparative advantages, close coordination and cooperation (rather than information exchange) amongst the United Nations organizations, the World Bank and bilateral donors present a major challenge.

CCA, UNDAF and PRSP

17. Senegal, a pioneer in being one of the eleven pilot countries in which the CCA and UNDAF concept has been tried, published its first CCA and UNDAF in 1999. Updates of both the CCA and UNDAF were published in 2001. The draft documents were discussed in a workshop in which the United Nations, the World Bank, IMF, government officials and civil society participated. The documents are of good quality and provide valuable insights in the challenges facing the Government and its partners.

18. The revised CCA and UNDAF led to the identification of three priority areas for United Nations assistance to Senegal: effective governance at the national and local levels; poverty alleviation activities in the regions of Tambacounda and Casamance; and advocacy of universal education. The priorities identified by the UNDAF will enhance the complementarity and coordination of the United Nations system and increase its responsiveness to government and development priorities. The new programming period of UNDP and UNFPA started in 2002.

19. In just over six months, the Government produced a draft poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) based on a participatory process in which civil society and other stakeholders took part. A consensus document was published in late 2001, but the Government is still finalizing the document by integrating comments from its international development partners and civil society. The Government of Senegal took a leading role in producing the PRSP. The mission noted that

UNDAF I and II preceded the publication of the PRSP. The mission questioned whether the sequencing should not have been otherwise.

20. Government officials commended UNDP for arranging the consultative process with civil society and other stakeholders, including regional consultations, in the preparation of the PRSP. They also conceded that the focus on rural poverty in the PRSP was largely the influence of UNDP. Building on its involvement in the first national poverty alleviation strategy of Senegal (1997-2000), UNDP had consistently focused on this theme during the preparation of the PRSP.

21. UNDP was also instrumental in arranging for a household survey, a socio-economic mapping exercise and focus group interviews as part of the bottom-up approach to the PRSP-process. The outcomes provide valuable insights into the perceptions of poverty and the coping strategies of target groups, thereby forming an indispensable complement to the statistics in the various documents. Whereas the actual proportion of the population under the official poverty level is 54 per cent, for example, more than 65 per cent of respondents in the focus-group interviews viewed themselves as poor.

22. UNDP took the lead in producing, in cooperation with government and the other United Nation organizations, a report on the MDGs within the context of Senegal. The report outlines the policies and challenges facing the Government for each of the MDGs and identifies priority actions. Also in 2001, the national human development report was published. The mission felt that these high-quality documents provided ample guidance to the national authorities and their development partners. Prioritization and particularly the implementation of the policy documents are the next step.

23. The mission wishes to underline that the challenges to meet the MDGs in Senegal should be considered in a regional perspective. Many of the structural impediments, such as ecological degradation, cannot be solved at a national level. The mission noted with concern that funds for regional programmes are dwindling as a result of the limited financial resources of the United Nations.

UNDP contribution in selected areas

24. The Executive Board adopted the second country cooperation framework (CCF) for Senegal (2002-2004) during the second regular session in September 2001. For the three-year period, an estimated $9.9 million will be made available from UNDP core resources, 5.7 million less than the previous financial period (1997-2000). The resource mobilization target table indicates that more than double this amount, an additional $21.3 million, should be mobilized from non-core resources. UNDP advises that raising such substantial non-core funding is a time-consuming undertaking, taking time and energy away from programme activities. The United Nations system funding looks sufficient to fully respond to government initiatives.

25. According to the resource mobilization target table for 2002-2004, no government cost-sharing is available for Senegal. The low level of government cost-sharing in Africa has generally been a cause of concern for the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board. Several members of the team encouraged the Government and UNDP to pursue the possibility of government cost-sharing.

26. The reduced core funding and the re-profiling exercise also affected the staffing levels of field offices. The recent 15 per cent reduction of the core personnel budget, approved in the second regular session of the Executive Board in September 2001, has had serious repercussions in Senegal. UNDP Senegal decided to effect savings by cutting the international post of Deputy Resident Representative-Operations within the country team. Whereas the mission is acutely aware of the need to balance resources and expenditures, it stressed the inherent risks of such measures and the need for sound financial management of the scarce resources.

27. The CCF for 1997-2001 focused on two priority areas: poverty alleviation and good governance. Since only the poverty alleviation support document was formulated and signed, it was the main focus during the previous planning cycle. Results achieved are documented in the second CCF for Senegal presented to the Executive Board in January 2002 (DP/CCF/SEN/2).

28. The new programme of UNDP (2002-2004) remains focused on poverty alleviation (70 per cent of the resources) and governance (30 per cent). The Government and UNDP recently elaborated an ambitious governance programme in five key areas. This programme is an instrument in the fight against corruption, one of the priorities of the new Government.

29. In both priority areas, the strategic approach is to focus on upstream policy advice to the Government. The government administration in Senegal, however, is relatively well developed, with capable top-level bureaucrats producing a variety of quality-vision documents. Whereas the rationale for the UNDP strategy on upstream policy advice was not under discussion, some mission members felt that, given the context and constraints of Senegal, a revised balance with more "downstream" development schemes on investments to reduce poverty could have a real added value. Effectiveness and the potential for future up-scaling of such initiatives should be carefully considered before embarking on such projects.

30. Senegal greatly benefits from the extensive support through the United Nations Volunteers (UNV). Almost 50 UNV volunteers work in Senegal, most of whom are Senegalese nationals. UNV volunteers work mainly in the area of poverty reduction programmes, where their nationality is an asset. This mission concluded that such a formula could be further encouraged.

UNCDF

31. Senegal recently started a decentralization process, in which UNCDF is an important development partner with a substantial programme called the Local Development Fund (FDL). Decentralization is seen as an important complement to the national poverty alleviation programme. A unified methodology, however, has yet to be developed by the national authorities, with the result that the various organizations have started their own initiatives. The mission recommends that the Government take a stronger lead in developing an appropriate methodology.

32. The FDL programme is located in the Kedegou division, one of the poorest areas of the country. Low-income local communities live under difficult socio-economic circumstances, symbolized by a lack of access to basic social and economic services such as health care and potable water. The programme aims at bringing a sustainable improvement in beneficiary's access to socio-economic facilities and natural resources for production. Giving voice to the rural poor is an important element of UNCDF intervention in Kedegou.

33. The FDL programme is in its final stages. With seed money provided by UNCDF, the approach is now ready for expansion. Replication of the programme with funding from other organizations, such as the World Bank, is being prepared. Such replication initiatives are indicative of the success of the programme.

34. In general, sustainability of projects and programmes outside the capital city of Dakar is an issue of concern. The mission is cognizant of the difficulties involved in bringing basic facilities, such as schools and primary health care to the poor, dispersed population in rural areas. There is little purchasing power in these areas and the economic opportunities, while certainly there, are perhaps not sufficient to generate enough employment and income for the rural population to sustain these facilities. The long-term involvement of the development community is needed in these circumstances.

UNIFEM

35. The office of UNIFEM in Dakar covers 25 countries in French-speaking West Africa. With a small staff and limited funds, strategic initiatives in selected countries in the region are developed focusing on the promotion women's human rights through the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and poverty eradication. This has included support for a network of African women economists who will address gender and women's rights issues in policy design processes, such as PRSPs, trade agreements, statistics and indicators on unpaid work; women's political empowerment in electoral and constitutional review processes; the mainstreaming of gender and women's rights into HIV/AIDS policies and programmes; peace and security; and ending violence against women, including female genital mutilation.

36. UNIFEM has supported training activities to enhance the income-generating potential of the non-profit Women's Museum on the Island of Gorée. The Museum is managed by a team of women, including a group of women with disabilities.

The contribution of UNFPA

37. For the five-year period 2002-2006, UNFPA will contribute $7.5 million from regular resources to the Senegal population programme. The objective is to raise an additional $4 million through co-financing modalities, resulting in a total contribution of $11.5 million. This is substantially less than the previous planning cycle (1997-2001), in which $10 million were earmarked from regular resources and an additional $5 million were raised from non-core resources.

38. Scarce resources forced UNFPA to downsize its programme, focusing on two instead off three programme priorities and two instead of five regions. In the revised strategy, adopted by the Executive Board in September 2001, UNFPA outlined as programme priorities: reproductive health and population and development strategies. The reproductive health sub-programme focuses mostly on the Tambacounda and Kolda regions, where the contraceptive prevalence rate is lowest and unmet needs highest.

39. The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is 1.4 per cent among adults and thus comparable to that of Western Europe and the United States. This is largely a result of the early and effective intervention by the Government through an information and awareness campaign to counter the spread of HIV/AIDS. During the visit to various project sites, the team felt encouraged by the open and enthusiastic approach to reproductive health issues, particularly of youth and adolescents.

40. With scarce resources, the impact of UNFPA-activities depends to a large extent on the multiplier effect. Through active participation of the target group, the aim is to have participants become advocates for reproductive health. Civil society is an active partner of UNFPA in awareness-raising. The mission was impressed with the quality of various partner non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that were visited. It was gratifying to see that a little seed money was having a relatively significant impact on the lives of many Senegalese youth.

41. UNFPA provides support to the hospital Le Dantec in Dakar through infrastructural improvement in the maternity wards; establishment of a successful model of integrated reproductive health services, including operational research on reproductive health issues; training ground for training in emergency obstetrical care for health personnel of the whole country. The continued good work of the hospital, however, is jeopardized as a result of a lack of adequate resources to provide for more substantive rehabilitation. To gather sufficient financial means for the structural upkeep of its structures, the hospital would have to raise the prices that they charge patients. This would inhibit the target group of poor Senegalese to avail themselves of their services. In this sense, the mission felt that sustainability of support was also an issue in this programme.

42. The last population census was done in 1988. The Government has decided to hold a new census, which thus far is partially budgeted. UNFPA has provided valuable support to preparations for the census, including preparation of questionnaires and a socio-economic cartography. The Government will make a request to the donor community for additional funds to close the financial gap.

Overall conclusions

43. To do justice to and to gain a fuller appreciation for the full extent and impact of the work of the United Nations family in Senegal, particularly UNDP, UNFPA, UNCDF and UNIFEM, a longer, more substantive visit would have been necessary. Based on a mission of four and a half days, the Group can only derive general conclusions from its visit.

44. A stronger governmental lead in the overall coordination seems warranted. The organization of a Consultative Group meeting in the near future could provide a valuable opportunity to achieve priorities of the new Government with the international community. The mission encourages UNDP, UNFPA, UNCDF and UNIFEM to strengthen their strategic partnerships with the bilateral donors.

45. Interagency coordination seems to work well but could be intensified to include joint programming and joint interventions. The mission recommends that, as part of the UNDAF process, the United Nations family explore the possibilities and externalities of joint programming. This may require further harmonization and simplification of rules and procedures, which was called for in the TCPR resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its 56th session.

46. The mission noted that United Nations organizations are thin on the ground: the staffing levels and core budget contribution of both UNDP and UNFPA are small compared with the needs. The projects seen were well-executed and achieved their objectives, some surpassing original goals. Nevertheless, a lack of resources limited the scope of work, but not the substance. Substantial additional resources are required to enhance the impact on poverty alleviation. The mission noted the success of UNDP and UNFPA in mobilizing additional non-core resources in Senegal. However, raising additional non-core funds is time-consuming. The impact on poverty and governance are the only real indicators of success and call for adequate monitoring.

47. The mission noted the pro-active stance of the United Nations family in Senegal to produce a second generation CCA and UNDAF in 2001, as well as a national human development report and a national report on MDGs. The mission discerned that these reports, further complemented by the contribution of UNDP to the PRSP process, were significant achievements. The mission commended the Government of Senegal for the participatory preparation and the quality of the PRSP, which was prepared in a relatively short period of time.